

Faults Of Shortgrass Country Hard To See In Spring Like This

By Monte Noelke

3-5-70

Page 11

MERTZON — Soft winter rains have fallen across the Shortgrass Country. Feeder steers are topping way into the 40s. Lambs are in a strong position. The scene is set for the revival of an industry that has been in worse shape than a trombone player with a capped elbow.

A few more days of this kind of luck and the citizens will be chanting that the depression is over.

The signs have been pointing toward a change in fortune since early December. When I went deer hunting out west, tarantulas were crossing the roads in a snowstorm. That omen has never failed to forecast glad tidings. Those hairy legged spiders fall short on the beauty side, but any time you see them moving in the snow, you can bet your roll that good times are on the way.

Members of the younger generation scoff at putting any faith in a spider's habit. The fuzzy-checked set have been brought up to believe that unless a situation can be charted on a graph or programmed through a computer, it's nothing but superstitious folklore. In our state colleges and universities, certain groups of students and professors make a big play of scorning the stories Frank Dobie wrote about what he learned while wandering in the outdoors. A portion of the new intelligentsia thrives on making fun of Dobie and his nature-loving contemporaries.

Their arguments is difficult to deny. Modern developments have created many beautiful objects to replace the unplanned natural scene. Cities have blossomed into steel and concrete structures. Artificial pathways and marvelously structured bridges grace our land and rivers. Asphalt highways spin fascinating patterns in every direction and cable-draped utility poles adorn the skies. Meadows have been cleared; thousands of billboards provide shady roadside picnic spots.

Progress has altered the pattern of flora and fauna. City children are exposed to nature in the museums and zoos. Concrete pools and man-made ponds serve every neighborhood.

If a kid wanted to see a tarantula cross the road today, there's probably a service for hire that has a trained tarantula caravan.

In my homeland, the prairies still offer the old fashioned lessons. Parts of the area remain undecorated by man's technology and are unblessed by the tumultuous roar of his inventions. Horse pitching and playing, or cattle bedding on high ground, continue to foretell weather changes; our denizens forsake urban sophistication for the solitude of a near-desert country.

In you will, mark this column off as an intermission in my reports from the Shortgrass Country. For several years I've described our problems and flaws, but actually, at its worst, the country and the people are easy to love. As it is today, with the grass growing and the market heating, that love affair is easier to carry on than ever before.